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S E C R E T SAIGON 2869

REF: STATE 19258

Q. DONG HA INCIDENT:

FULL ACCOUNT OF QUANG TRI DONG HA AFFAIR AND
DEVELOPMENTS FLOWING FROM IT
HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN COURSE OF PAST FEW DAYS. TEXTS
OF CANDIDATES COMMUNIQUE CONTAINED SAIGON 2767; CANDIDATES
AUGUST 8 LETTER SAIGON 2835; GVN'S AUGUST 11 LETTER SAIGON
2868. REPORTS OF AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATIONS WITH THIEU AND KY
ON SUBJECT TRANSMITTED SAIGON 2886 AND 2867.
IN BRIEF, IT APPEARSINCIDENT AROSE CHIEFLY FROM UNFORTUNATE
CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO
MISUNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN CANDIDATES AND GVN. DESPITE
MANY ALLEGATIONS AND CHARGES, IT DOES NOT SEEM MIX-UP WAS
A PREMEDITATED GVN ACT TO

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HUMILIATE CANDIDATES AS LATTER ALEEGE BUT WAS
RATHER COUNTRIBUTIONS OF BAD WEATHER AND POOR
PLANNING, EXECUTION AND JUDGMENT BY CERTAIN GVN OFFICIALS,
COMBINED WITH IMPATIENCE AND SUSPICIOON ON PART OF CANDIDATES

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WHO HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY DECIDED EXPLOIT ISSUE FOR OBVIOUS POLITICAL PURPOSES# NEITHER SIDE HAS ACTED IN WAY DESIGNED TO RESOLVE ISSUE EASILY AND PERMIT RESUMPTION OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN BUT IT DOES NOT APPEAR AT THIS TIME THAT IT WILL LEAD TO WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATES FROM RACE. BOTH THIEU AND KY EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE TODAY THAT MATTER WOULD BE WORKED OUT, BUT TUONG LETTER DOES NOT SEEM TO AFFORD LIKELY BASIS FOR SATISFYING CANEIDATES DESIRES. WE HAVE COUNSELED MODERATION ON BOTH SIDES AND URGED THATTHIS AFFAIR NOT BE ALLOWED BLOCK CAMPAIGN EFFORT AND ULTIMATE FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS.
PRIVATE CAMPAIGNING BY SEVERAL CANDIDATES OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES IS CONTINUING.
IN SHORT YOUR CHARACTERIZATION OF DONG HA INCIDENT IS ACCURATE INSOFAR AS WE KNOW THE FACTS. IT MIGHT BE ADDED THAT GENERAL THIEU

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IN HIS AUGUST 8 PRESS CONFERENCE SPECIFICALLY SAID THAT ANY REQUEST FROM THE CANDIDATES FOR ASSISTANCE IN TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES-WOULD BE MET. HE SAID THAT IF THERE WERE ERRORS IN THE GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF CAMPAIGN ARRANGEMENTS, WOULD ACCEP THE BLAME, AND HE STATEDHIS WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES TO MAKE THE CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS.

2. KY COMMENTS RE MILITARY COUP:
KY HAS EXPLAINED TO AMBASSADOR THAT HE WAS MISQUOTED AND THAT WHAT HE SAID WAS THAT HE WAS CONVINCED VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN ILLEGAL OR FRAUDULENT ELECTED GOVERNMENT AND THAT HE WOULD NOT EITHER. WE BELIEVE CONCULSION STATED REFTEL THAT THEIU AND KY HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL ACCEPT ELECTION RESULTS IS WARRANTED FROM NUMBER OF STATEMENTS THEY HAVE BOTH MADE TO AMBASSADOR IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS. AMBASSADOR HAS SPECIFICALLY TOLD KY THAT WE CAN NOT COUNTERANCE ANY COUPS AND KY STATED THAT THERE WILL NOT BE ANY COUPS.

3. REPORT ON ALLEGED "MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE".

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WE AGREE THAT ALLEGATIONS HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT
BASIS IN FACT SO FAR AS CAN BE

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ASCERTAINED, THEIU AND Y HAVE BOTH SAID THIS TO AMBASSADOR
CONSTITUTION DOES PROVIDE FOR ARMED FORCES COUNCIL TO OPERATE
IN MILITARY ARENA BUT THIS IS PRESUMABLY NOT THE COUNCIL
REFERRED TO. AS INTERPRETED BY KY TODAY IN
CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR (SAIGON 2867) GROUP IS PRESUMABLY
THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE WHO MEET REGULARLY TO
CONSIDER MATTERS RELATING TO
REORGANIZATION AND IMPROVEMENTTO RVNAF,
PACIFICATION AND RELATED SUBJECTS.
KY STATED THERE IS NO INNERGROUP WHICH WILL SEEK TO
CONTROL GOVERNMENT AFTER ELECTIONS AS CALLEDED AND SAID
THIS STORY COULD BE FLATLY DENIED.

4. CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS:
FOLLOWING IS REQUESTED SUMMARY STATEMENT OF OUR VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT
CONDUCT IN RESPECT TO FREE ELECTIONS. BOTH GENERAL THEIU AND
GENERAL KY ARE ON THE PUBLIC RECORD WITH PLEDGES TO CONDUCT FREE
AND FAIR ELECTIONS, AND THEY HAVE MADE SIMILAR STATEMENTS
TO AMBASSADOR. THEY HAVE BOTH CALLED ON ALL OFFICIALS CONCERNED
TO MAKE SURE THAT THE ELECTIONS ARE INDEED FAIR AND FREE.
KY IN PARTICULAR TOOK ADVANTAGEOF SEVERAL MEETINGS OF PROVINCAL

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OFFICIALS INVOLVED WITH THE ELECTIONS TO MAKE THIS POINT. PRESS
CENSORSHIP HAS BEEN LIFTED, AND VIETNAMESE JOUNALISTS HAVE NOT
HESITATED TO PRINT ARTICLES THAT
ARE VERY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND QUITE FAVORABLE TO
SOME OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES.

TV AND RADIO ARRANGEMENTSHAVE BEEN VERY GOOD
AD COMPLETELY FREE. THE CANDIDATES GOT WHAT THEY ASKED FOR,
AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO

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COMPLIANTS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO ASSISTED THE CANDIDATES BY GIVING THEM A LARGE SUM OF MONEY WHICH THEY ARE FREE TO SPEND AS THEY SEE FIT ON THEIR CAMPAIGN. THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE MOST UNUSUAL IN ANY COUNTRY, AND THEY CERTAINY GO WELL BEYOND ANYTHING THAT THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS EVER CONSIDERED DOING FOR OPPOSITION CANDIDATES.

IT MUST BE ADMITTED THAT IN THE PRE-CAMPAIGN PERIOD, KY DID A NUMBER OF THINS THAT SUGGESTED THE ELECTION WOULD BE UNFAIR AND UEQUAL.

THE REACTION TO THESE EFFORTS WAS VERY STRONG, AND WAS ENGAGED IN AN EFFORT TOPROVE THAT HE WOULD NOT TAKEUNFAIR ADVANTAGE WHEN THE MERGER OF THE THEIU AND KY SLATES TOOK PLACE. SINCE THAT TIME, THE GOVERNMENT RECORD HAS BEEN GOOD IN GENERAL. WE DO NOT FEEL

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THAT THE EVIDENCE TO DATE SUGGESTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TREATED THE OTHER CANDIDATES UNFAIRLY OR THAT THEIU-KY ARE DETERMINED TO WIN THE ELECTION BY FAIR MEANS OF FOUL. CERTAINLY THEY DO WANT TO WIN, AND THEY ARE MAKING FULL USE OF THE NORMAL ADVANTAGES OF THE INCUMBENT-SUCH THINGS AS NONPOLITIAL INSPECTION TRIPS AND CEREMONIES, AND GESTURES TO VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION, ARE TAKING PLACE, BUT WE FIND IT HARD FOR EXAMPLE, TO CRITICZE KY FOR PERSIDING AT CEREMONIES WHERE LAND TITLES ARE HANDED OUT TO PEASANTS AS PART OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM, AND WE THINK THAT FEW HONEST CRITICS WOULD DO SO. THAT IS ABOUT THE WORST THAT HE HAD DONE
SINCE THE FORMAL CAMPAIGN BEGAN.

THERE ARE ALSO CHARGES OF SECRET ORDERS TO PROVINCE CHIEFS AND MILITARY COMMANDERS TO INSURE THAT THE VOTES GOES TO THEIUAKY.
THESE ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE.

TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE OF SUCH ORDERS.
IN LARGE PART IT APPEARS TO BE MORE A MATTER OF INFLUENCE AND THE NATURAL TENDENCY HERE TO TRY TO PLACATE THE AUTHRORITIES.
THIS TENDENCY WILL CERTAINLY HELP THE THEIEU-KY TICKET.

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BUT THIEU-KY CAN HARDLY BE BLAMED FOR IT. IT IS A LEGACY OF CENTURIES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND WILL NOT BE BANISHED OVERNIGHT BY ANY REGIME.

5. AMBASSADOR BUNKER CONCURS IN SUBSTANCE OF FOREGOING.

BUNKER

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